

7 FAM 130 EMERGENCY MESSAGES

(TL:CON-1 4-15-83)

7 FAM 131 PRIORITY OF EMERGENCY MESSAGES

The expeditious handling of requests to pass along emergency messages is given the highest priority by the Department. Accordingly, the officer charged with the responsibility of seeing that such messages are passed must immediately attend to this task.

7 FAM 132 INITIAL REQUEST

As with reports of U.S. citizens missing abroad, the initial request to pass on an emergency message may be received by the post directly from the party in the United States or abroad, from another Foreign Service post, or from the Department. From wherever the initial call is received, the person taking the call must attempt to obtain sufficient information to enable the post to locate quickly the person sought and transmit the message. Most of these cases will involve either tourists believed to be in that particular consular district or U.S. citizens known to be living in that district. In either instance, it is likely that the requesting party will have sufficient detailed information to enable the post to convey the message rapidly if the consular employee asking the questions is able to identify and elicit the required information. In this task the telephone manner of the consular employee will be extremely important.

7 FAM 133 POST ACTION

Upon receipt of the initial request, the officer responsible for missing person case evaluates the information provided to determine the most likely method of locating the intended recipient and delivering the message. If the post knows or can obtain the telephone number of the person sought, the officer should contact that number as soon as possible and convey the message. If a local address is known but not the telephone number, the officer should either send a domestic telegram or send someone with the message. Local mail facilities are too slow.

If the information provided is not specific but information is available on an itinerary, the consular officer should study the itinerary and decide the most likely places to leave messages or to intercept the person sought. It might be possible to leave a message at a hotel, or possibly several hotels, at which this person would be likely to stay. Perhaps immigration or customs officials could be asked to convey a message at likely border crossings. The key here is that the responsible officer must do what appears most likely to satisfy the request.

Should the consular officer learn that the person being sought has left the district for another consular district, that information along with the identifying information provided originally should be passed to the pertinent post for its action, with an information copy sent to the Department. All reasonable steps to locate the individual and convey the message should be taken, including enlisting the aid of other posts when necessary.

Finally, there will be instances when the person requesting the service is not sure that the person sought is still in the consular officer's district but believes so. For example, John's mother received a letter 6 months ago from the district and has had no word since. Now John's father has died. It is an emergency message case, but one that will involve most of the aspects of a missing persons request. The consular officer's duty is to locate the individual and pass along the message. Because the case initially was one of an emergency nature and the timeliness of the message will be lost by the time the person is found, there may be a tendency to press the search less vigorously. This tendency must be resisted. See section 7 FAM 123c for the appropriate procedures.

If the person is located and the message delivered, quite often it will be necessary for the person to return rapidly to the United States or to send a return message. The consular officer must be alert to this need for sympathetic aid and offer all appropriate assistance and advice.

7 FAM 134 REPORTING ON EMERGENCY MESSAGES

In most, if not all, emergency message cases received initially by the Department and referred to a post for action, the telegram containing the request will also instruct the post how to notify the inquirer of the results of the search. The consular officer should follow these instructions carefully, using the correct format (see 7 FAM 134 Exhibit 134 and section 7 FAM 170). If the officer is asked to respond by telegram, either interested party or interested party collect direct relay, the recipient will bear the cost of the message domestically from Washington, D.C. Include only the minimum of information and follow up, if necessary, in a letter. Should the post be required to reply to the Department, as will be the case in all Congressional requests, the post must provide full details regarding the search efforts.

Generally, the Congressional office is satisfied with knowing that the message was or was not passed, but there are instances where further details are requested. In these instances, the Department should not have to request the additional information by another telegram. It is easier for the post to provide all information at one time than to attempt to recall its actions several days later.

7 FAM 135 PRIVACY ACT RESTRICTIONS

Requests to pass emergency messages also have some Privacy Act implications. The Act has been interpreted to prohibit the passing of information concerning an individual's whereabouts without that individual's prior written consent. Therefore, a post could not report to the inquirer that Ms. X was in Aberdeen, in its consular district, but left on January 1 for Birmingham. Such information should be provided to the post serving Birmingham, permitting that post to continue the search. The initial post could report to the inquirer that Ms. X is no longer in its district, but that the Department is continuing its efforts to locate Ms. X and will advise the inquirer of any developments.

Negative information may be provided the inquirer. A post might tell the inquirer that the subject of the search has departed its district and left no forwarding address or that a careful search failed to reveal any information that Ms. X is or was in the consular district.

A post that has questions concerning what is permissible under the Privacy Act in any situation should contact the Department (CA/OCS/EMR) for instructions.

7 FAM 136 THROUGH 139 UNASSIGNED

7 FAM 134 Exhibit 134

Sample of Post Telegram Reporting on Welfare and Whereabouts Case

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TELEGRAM		INDICATE <input type="checkbox"/> COLLECT <input type="checkbox"/> CHARGE TO	
FROM AmEmbassy LONDON		CLASSIFICATION UNCLASSIFIED	
E.O. 12356:	N/A		
TAGS:	CASC And Country Symbol (PUBLIC, John Q.)		
SUBJECT:	W/W: Emergency Message for John Q. Public		
ACTION:	SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY		
UNCLAS LONDON			
Ref: State 12345			
1. Congressman Jones interested.			
2. Upon receipt of Reftel, Consul left message to call Embassy immediately at Hilton Hotel, Sheraton Park and Princess Hotel. Also left message with PAN AM and requested assistance of British customs officials in contacting Mr. Public. Message was received by Public at Hilton Hotel. Consul passed message Reftel and assisted Mr. Public in placing collect call to his sister at 1945 hours. Mr. Public scheduled to depart London at 1030 hours via PAN AM 069, arriving New York at 2055 hours.			
SMITH			
DRAFTED BY: Steven L. Roark		DRAFTING DATE 2/15/83	TEL. EXT. 9025
CLEARANCES:		CONTENTS AND CLASSIFICATION APPROVED BY: John V. Bon Tempo	
UNCLASSIFIED			
CLASSIFICATION			
OPTIONAL FORM 153 (Formerly FS-413) January 1975 Dept. of State			

